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SAFETY IS...



● **AT THE
UNION'S
ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
(AAD) IN
NOTTINGHAM**



● **AT EUSTON
STATION - BY
THE UNION
MEMORIAL
FOR RAIL
VICTIMS**



● **AT MAJOR
STATIONS
ACROSS THE
COUNTRY -
ON ITF RAIL
SAFETY DAY**

...THE WORD

COMMISSIONS UNDERTAKEN FOR ORIGINAL OIL PAINTINGS AT COMPETITIVE PRICES

ARTIST

Frederick James Taylor
Guild of Railway Artists (Assoc. Member)
Guild of Wiltshire Artists

These pictures of my work show samples of oil paintings produced from black/white and colour photos. If you have a favourite photo or locomotive that you would like painted specifically for you, then please contact me to discuss your requirements.

Although I specialize in painting trains, I also undertake a wide variety of other subjects including aircraft, portraits, animals, landscapes etc. To find out more about my work, please log on to my website.



9F at Willesden circa 1963



GWR Dean Class at Brinkworth



The Princess Royal



King Edward I

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CONFERENCE 2009 ■■■■■■■■

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Cover Photo: Els Dekker

GET OVER THE GIGGLING – THIS IS SERIOUS



At our conference last month Lord Adonis said that while he was going round the country on his highly publicised week long 2,200 miles on 50 trains he found just about everything to his satisfaction, except, he said, 'the servicing and cleaning of toilets on the trains'.

If he didn't like the toilet facilities for passengers, he should have taken a look at what's provided for staff. Admittedly this would have been difficult on the freight side – because there's often nothing to look at. I know freight depots where the toilet facilities consist of a portaloo at the entrance, which can be four miles away.

One conference delegate, a passenger train driver, explained that it was normal for drivers in his branch to arm themselves with a plastic bottle when they set out on a turn, and this wasn't for something to drink. Quite the reverse.

I know we Brits enjoy a good snigger when we mention toilets, but this reluctance to raise the issue may account for the fact that toilet facilities for drivers are an insult to professionals like ourselves. Our cabs, thanks to our cab conditions campaign Squash, are gradually coming up to standard. We're encouraged into smart uniforms and asked to present ourselves looking tidy and professional. That's often difficult when you've just emerged from a lavatory that Dickens's urchins would have turned their noses up at.

And however poor the conditions are for men, they are twice as bad for women. Rail companies are supposed to be attracting women into the driving grades. What sort of woman is going to be attracted to work in an area where a prerequisite appears to be the ability to hold your bladder for an eight hour stretch?

Perhaps the only hint of light in this mess is that it proves to our less progressive colleagues that fighting for equal opportunities often benefits us all. We argue for toilet facilities for women and the knock-on is an improvement in the facilities for men.

One of our women drivers told me last week about complaints she'd made over a decade ago about a women's loo that was unsanitary, unventilated and disgusting. When she'd raised it in the mess room, a few of the men said they didn't know what she was complaining about: it was no different for men – their toilets were disgusting as well!

In the end the facilities were improved for both men and women at this depot – which is exactly what I like. You do something for someone else and get a benefit for yourself – so you can feel good about doing yourself a favour.

KEITH NORMAN
GENERAL SECRETARY

UNPREDICTABLE CHALLENGES – BUT STILL TRADE UNION SOLUTIONS

'What a difference a year makes,' said President Alan Donnelly in his address to last month's union's annual conference of delegates (AAD). 'Last year our guest speaker Alan Simpson was predicting that oil would soon cost 300 dollars a barrel. Today it is 42 dollars. We had no inkling of the economic crisis or that today train drivers would be threatened with redundancy.'

Alan was proud that no ASLEF members had left the industry against their will.

'We've also worked hard to improve our union for the challenges to come by involving more members in ASLEF activity,' he said. 'When there were calls for changes in representative committees, the EC went to the people on the ground for advice. Our first national forum last November

attracted people who had not been active. Initiatives on education have involved members who had never previously played a role in the union.'

'Only a weak Executive Committee spurns the advice of the membership. We are a strong EC that welcomes it,' he said.

Alan had harsh words for 'abusive and corrupt' politicians from whatever side of the political divide. 'Our union will seek to remove them and increase confidence and belief in our representatives.'

The President called for 'imaginative and flexible solutions' to the real problems confronting the freight industry. 'We had been offered practically nothing in pay talks with Freightliner, and the first time the union met DB Schenker

they wanted to talk about 159 redundancies.

'What kind of message is that for a new business? We talked on the basis that there would be no redundancies at all, even offering temporary changes in conditions. But 'no redundancies' is the bottom line.'

It angered Alan that now Train Operating Companies were 'trying it on' as well. 'They are still making profits – they're just not as obscene as they used to be.'

Relations with other unions were not as good as they should be, Alan conceded – but ASLEF had taken a principled approach to all the problems. 'The RMT has accused us of being a friend of management. I won't even bother to answer that – apart from saying that if they want to use ASLEF to be a



The President says we've been here since 1880 – and we're not going away!

battering ram for their interests, they can think again. 'So it is with Unite – they are dreaming if they think we're handing our people at Croydon back to them. We represent those people best – and we'll continue to do so. I'm less worried about getting kicked out of the TUC than I am about representing light rail drivers well.

'Light rail is the future – and ASLEF will play a leading part in that future.'

Alan concluded, 'We need a healthy and sustainable union that can involve and represent its members if we are to continue to exist as a proud and efficient independent union. We've been here since 1880 – and we intend to be here for as long again.'



Delegates to ASLEF's 2009 AAD. Conference Photography: Pete Jenkins



Financial mission accomplished, says general secretary Keith Norman

UNION FINANCES 'HEALTHY'

The union declared a surplus after exceptional items of £214,000 for the previous year. There was a reduction in office expenses of £67,000. The

operating surplus before exceptional items was £516,000 compared with £265,000 in 2007 – an improvement of over £250,000.

'I'm delighted that the union's finances are back where they should be,' Keith Norman said. 'It was one of the main objectives I set myself when I became general secretary.'

UNION TO SEEK NEW HEAD OFFICE

LUL rep Finn Brennan says that Arkwright Road is a fine historical building – but adds, 'There is an organisation for looking after our national monuments, and that is the National Trust. ASLEF isn't in that business. We're a trade union that needs a building that is fit for purpose.'

All the delegates to this year's conference had admired and enjoyed the Hampstead offices over the years, but felt that the union and its staff deserved top class facilities that could not be provided in the existing head office.

They insisted, however, that the regalia and history of the union should be housed in any new building.

£10 MAX ON PRIV?

The union is to seek an agreement with all rail employers that the maximum price of a privilege rail ticket – outside a season ticket – should be capped at £10.

It will also separately seek to negotiate that all employees have the same entitlement to privilege tickets as safeguarded

staff.

IMPROVEMENT SOUGHT

ASLEF is to seek an agreement with employers which allows the right to accompaniment at all levels, including first time investigation. This has been accepted in some companies, including Northern Rail, but does not exist in the disciplinary procedures of many employers.

CHANGE TO CHARTER

There has been an amendment to the ASLEF charter to include a clause saying that all members unable to continue in their role due to ill-health or medical restrictions should retain their full rate of pay, regardless of any other lower-paid grade or role they may be placed in as a result.

RAIL MINISTER POLITELY GRILLED

RAIL minister Andrew Adonis – aka Lord Camden – told the ASLEF conference growth was the theme of today's railways, which he said were in a better state than at any other time in its history.

He had recently travelled 2,200 miles on more than 50 trains, including four cab rides, on a special ticket offering unlimited rail travel for a week. The ticket cost £375 – but one ASLEF delegate pointed out that the week afterwards ATOC raised the cost by 15%! The Lord said he was 'not amused' by this, and accused ATOC of 'worrying about success'. It apparently was concerned that people would start buying the tickets if passengers thought they were cheap!

During his tour, he said, he got an overriding impression of 'better frequency, punctuality and comfort than at any time of railway history'. His four cab journeys had made him recognise that drivers deserved 'a clean, comfortable and safe working environment' – and said he'd welcome ASLEF's views on cab design which he says will, in the next generation of trains, include 'head up displays for train cabs, similar to those used in fighter planes'.

He said that he couldn't turn the clock back, but he was sure that if Labour had been in power in the 1990s, rail would not have been nationalised. So why, he was asked, had Labour not taken it back into public hands? Lord Adonis said he was afraid of subjecting the industry to more upheaval, and so sought to get the best deal rather than replace it outright.

He also said it would cost money because the franchise companies were contracted to pay money to the government which would be lost if the keys were taken off them. He added, however, that no franchise would be allowed to renegotiate a contract for better terms because of the economic downturn.



Andrew Adonis, Lord Camden, is optimistic about rail's future

Lord Adonis was also buoyant about freight, saying traffic has increased by 59% since 1995 and was at levels not seen since the 1970s – but when questioned by Nigel Roebuck he offered no help to freight companies to retain the drivers who would be needed at the end of the recession.

The minister was relaxed about Network Rail cutbacks on maintenance and renewals, repeating that 'it was not straightforward' and that the ORR would make sure that safety was maintained.

He was enthusiastic about high speed rail, and pleased that the government had set up High Speed Two, a company that would report back before the end of the year with 'firm route plans' from London to the Midlands perhaps beyond. In response to questioning about holding down prices for high speed travel, however, he was less definite. It seems that fares would have to be left to the market, as he didn't have funds for subsidies.

Finally he said increased electrification was been 'seriously considered' and again, final decisions would be made about which routes to prioritise later in the year. He concluded by urging ASLEF to play a central part in the debate about the future of rail, 'making the case for investment in a greener, more efficient, high capacity railway for the future'.

That invitation will certainly be taken up.

BBC CONDEMNED FOR BNP BROADCAST

The union is to complain to the BBC for allowing public money to be spent by allowing a party political broadcast on behalf of the extreme right wing BNP.

'I am a target for these people simply by walking down the road,' said ASLEF's Aaron Clapp. 'I urge people to become politically active because it is only apathy that allows the growth of this appalling organisation.'



Aaron Clapp: 'I am a target for these people'

CONDEMNATION FOR ISRAELI RAIL DISCRIMINATION

ASLEF is to campaign against new Israeli regulations which disqualify Arab workers from employment on that country's railways. The country has new regulations which require army service as an employment condition. As Palestinian Arabs who are citizens of Israel are exempt from service in the Israeli army, they are excluded from employment. 'This amounts to blatant apartheid,' said Peter Grant from Manchester Piccadilly. 'It is another blow to Palestinian people after the totally disproportionate attack they made on Gaza earlier this year.'



TUC President Sheila Bearcroft (left) called for a 'green economy not a greed economy' when she spoke to ASLEF delegates in Nottingham. 'Tax avoidance by the super-rich costs the UK purse £25 billion a year,' she said as she called for a new minimum tax rate of 32% for those earning over £100,000 a year.

AFFILIATION TO IRAN CAMPAIGNS

The union will affiliate to the Iran Workers Solidarity Network as well as working with Hands off the People of Iran to publicise the lack of trade union rights and the economic plight of working Iranians. ASLEF is pledged to support the struggles for the right to strike, to form unions independent of the regime, to obtain unpaid wages and their battles against redundancies, factory closures, privatisation and deregulation in a country constantly threatened by the US.



Delegates at the conference listen to the arguments

GREETINGS FROM UGANDA RAILWAY WORKERS UNION

THE URWU general secretary Samuel Wuma told ASLEF's conference that privatisation in his country was not 'a distant economic and social evil' but an open door for foreign investment that reduced the role of the government in its economy.

Samuel says, 'Privatisation of public companies makes workers vulnerable to exploitation, unemployment, underemployment and unwarranted tortures and murders'. It is why he calls for 'global trade union solidarity'.

When privatisation was first mooted in Uganda, the union realised it could not prevent the process, but sought to be involved in how the rail network would be sold. Concessions were made, but only after two strikes, one of two weeks which paralysed economic activity in the East and Central African regions. It concluded successfully for the union, but only after a Court ruling which proved financially crippling. However the URWU managed to secure pay and pension guarantees before

the sale went ahead.

The public Corporation was taken over by Rift Valley Railways and has behaved as expected: it is not meeting its obligations to remit 11% of its gross revenue as a franchise fee; it has not invested in spare parts, so that many locomotive and wagons have been grounded; lines have remained closed and cut the scope of the network; and reliability has fallen so that customers have ceased to have faith in the railways.

In the 1990s Ugandan railways employed 8,000 people. Cutbacks and closed lines had reduced this to 1,300 at the time of privatisation. The private firm took on only 700, relying on casual workers for other necessary work. Since then new jobs have not been created, and the railways are being run down rather than seen as an important part of Uganda's development.

Currently there are 805 railway employees, of whom 575 are unionised. 'Our union needs funds,' Samuel says. 'We don't have money for organising, we have



Samuel Wuma, the leader of Uganda's rail workers

to rent accommodation from the employer, we have no transport of our own and we have had to pay huge legal fees.'

The trains in Uganda are steam, and exclusively freight, Samuel, a former train driver himself, told the ASLEF delegates – and he said how pleased he was to see women in the driving profession and the union in the UK.

ASLEF delegates and the general secretary Keith Norman said that they did not want Samuel's visit to be a 'one-off' but the start of a long, lasting and fruitful relationship between the two unions.

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KEN LIVINGSTONE SAYS SOCIALISM ISN'T DEAD – AND HE'LL BE BACK!

KEN LIVINGSTONE opened the union's annual conference (AAD) saying he was speaking at the first trade union conference since 'The Great Tragedy'. He said he doubted that ASLEF's relations with the new incumbent would be quite as warm as they had been in his period



Ken Livingstone made the opening speech at ASLEF's annual conference

of office. But he didn't want to dwell only on London matters.

Instead he argued that society, the economy and the environment were all at a critical point, and proposed a number of solutions. 'We need planning, the regulation of financial markets, investment in worthwhile projects, scaled down profits and the redistribution of wealth within and across nations.

'The solution is the language of the left and of socialism that drove the creation of trade unions and the Labour Party,' he insisted. 'Socialism and public ownership are not ideas that have had their day. They are the solutions to the existing crisis.'

His final message was that he hoped he would see us all again on the campaign trail in three years time. 'I'm staying in my city and fighting for its future,' he declared.

LET'S BE PROUD OF OUR TOLPUDDLE HISTORY

ASLEF will have a higher presence at next year's Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival. A number of branches, especially those from London, always make an effort, and will do so again this month. Salisbury branch has acquired a new banner to provide a focus at the Dorchester event.

'It is important that we recognise the importance of preserving and celebrating the history of our movement and the Tolpuddle event is a prime way of doing it,' said Michael Butler from Neasden, arguing that we could put up a much better show. 'It's an opportunity for us to tell the public about our plans for the future of the railway.'

● This year's Tolpuddle Festival begins on 17 – 19 July and is the usual merry mix of politics, music and fun, including music from Billy Bragg and Transglobal Underground, speeches from Tony Benn and Brendan Barber, together with poetry, theatre and political discussions. For more information visit the front page of the ASLEF website (www.aslef.org.uk)

For the three days prior to the event the TUC is organising a Green Camp with the theme 'Green Action at Work' aimed at helping activists tackle climate change by promoting sustainable policies at work.

LIGHT RAIL DRIVERS BELONG IN ASLEF

Union President Alan Donnelly told conference delegates that the TUC's deputy general secretary, Frances O'Grady, had been to ASLEF's head office so that the EC members could explain to her first hand that the union will not be giving up members driving light rail in Croydon.

Alan said, 'ASLEF will represent any member driving on rails, regardless of them being mainline, tube or light rail.'

'If there is a wheel on a rail, the person driving that vehicle has the right to be represented by this union,' echoed Cliff Holloway, while Finn Brennan from East Finchley and Golders Green insisted that seeking to recruit every London tube worker was not poaching. 'It is poaching for another union to try to keep them out,' he said.

PUBLIC RAIL IS THE ANSWER

The union has reaffirmed its commitment to a renationalised railway, recalling that in 2005 the Labour Party conference overwhelmingly carried a motion committing the party to a publicly owned and controlled integrated transport system. The collapse of the capital markets and the banking system has made this even more important, topical and urgent.

Various speakers at this year's ASLEF conference insisted that we have a perfect opportunity to advance our case now, when the franchisers – who cost five times more than when the service was public and yet do it worse – are threatening to give up their contracts because their profits have ceased to be astronomical.

Sean Seymour said 'renationalisation' isn't a dirty word. 'It's a popular policy with the electorate – and the Labour government needs popular policies or it's going to find itself in Opposition.'



TRAVEL FACILITIES 'UNREASONABLE AND INEQUITABLE'

THE union will continue to argue for free rail travel for all its members – and it may feature as part of all next year's pay claims. General Secretary Keith Norman says members are increasingly annoyed at a situation which is 'clearly unreasonable and obviously not equitable'.

Some freight drivers have no privileges at all, others have free travel and a priv, some have boxes – and everyone else seems to have a mixture of these. Further, the quarter fare is now often more than the cheapest fare available.

Keith said the claim needs to be reinvigorated because the number of people who have full privilege travel – those who worked for BR – are declining each year. 'Once they are gone, reduced free travel will be unusual, rather than the norm, and thus will be more difficult to achieve,' he said. 'We will go to ATOC again, we'll lobby our MPs and we won't rule out using industrial action if that's what's needed to make progress.'

WHERE ARE THE LOOPS?

Drivers should be given information about the positioning of all TPWS over-speed loops on lines. There seems no reason for management to hide this information apart from a back-door attempt at monitoring.



Euston delegate Cliff Holloway speaks to conference

NEW DELEGATE SIMON SALUTES POSITIVE CONFERENCE

LAST month was the first time Simon Jenner from Hastings had been to an Annual Assembly of Delegates and he was, he says, 'encouraged and impressed'.

'It's amazing to be here from a small branch on the south coast and finding yourself



Hastings' Simon says conference was a useful and fruitful experience

helping to make decisions and form policies that will apply across the country. It's interesting to hear how the points are argued and advanced, and refreshing to see how, at the end, everyone accepts the outcome of debates.

'The highlight for me was listening to Samuel Wuma: having a visit from the leader of the Ugandan railway workers brings home that driving trains makes you part of a living international brotherhood.

'In fact, I thought all the guest speakers were appropriate and interesting. The woman from the TUC was a pleasure and while Lord Adonis didn't specialise in direct answers, it did reveal his political insights for the medium and long term. And it's always a pleasure to hear Ken Livingstone.

'My only disappointment was that the back of the hall wasn't

filled with local members. I'm sure they'd have enjoyed a very invigorating forum that was basically about them.

'But perhaps that shows why I thought the best decision of the week was to review the union's structure. We've sorted out finance and now we need to check everything else is in working order. We need to involve all our members. That's certainly what I'd like to happen in Hastings.

'It's been a very positive week. There's great value in the conversations outside the hall as well. It's good to speak to drivers from all over the country, listening to their problems and seeing slightly different solutions.

'Hastings branch hasn't been at the conference for many years, and I'm really proud to have represented them together with Grove Park and Ashford who are also in our rotation'.



Bristol's Bernard Kennedy chaired the union conference with flair and good humour. 'I was proud to be selected for this job for a second time,' he said. 'It is a great honour.'

NO COST FOR GETTING TO WORK

Train drivers should not be financially penalised for not being able to get to work on the railway, but this can often happen because of maintenance or because of the start time of a turn of duty. ASLEF aims to have train drivers classified as essential workers like nurses or the police to secure exemptions from penalties such as congestion charges.

TWO TONE BEST

Drivers cannot understand why the warning horn at whistle boards have been reduced from two to one tones on the basis that it is a safer practice. It is highly unlikely that one blast will not wake people sleeping near the track - but two would.

REVIEW OF UNION STRUCTURE UNDER WAY



THE union hopes to involve all levels of membership in a wide internal review of the union's structures. The existing organisation has been in place for many years, and the demographics of our membership have changed enormously. Further, the industry has changed radically while the union has remained basically unchanged.

The EC is determined that ordinary members as well as branches and districts must be heavily involved.

EC member Dave Calfe (left) said that non-active members often spoke about ASLEF as if it were some outside company, rather than an organisation they owned. 'We need to ask them what they want - and make sure we deliver it,' he said. 'Then we will bring the conclusions back to conference next year to make final decisions.'

UNION CONTINUES TO PRESS FOR SCOTLAND-TO-CHUNNEL FREIGHT LINE

The EC is to step up its efforts to publicise the benefits of having a dedicated freight route from Scotland to the Chunnel. This would make rail freight a much more attractive option than road by improving speed and reliability. To provide this, by linking up unused or underused existing lines, would only need an additional 12 miles of track and four tunnels according to an article Kelvin Hopkins MP wrote in a recent

ASLEF Journal.

Conference delegates argued that this would represent a better expenditure of money than pushing ahead with a third terminal at Heathrow.

Although Daniel Masrani said it should perhaps have priority over a high speed passenger route, he said that the logic was to work on both aspects of rail together.

'Let's get people out of airplanes and into trains, and

freight onto rail and off the road,' he said.

The project would keep freight rail workers employed, help the environment and provide a boost to industry.

Freight driver Mick Finn argued, 'The real key to the future is an integrated network with a continental gauge. We are not against air or lorries, we simply need the planning to ensure that all are used effectively.'



Daniel calls for an overall view of rail

WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE CALL FOR PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF RAIL?



asks **Gregor Gall**,
the professor of
industrial relations
at the University
of Hertfordshire

ASLEF has consistently challenged the current government to put one rail company into public ownership so that it can be benchmarked against the private companies. As we all know, the government has refused to take up this challenge of 'market testing'.

We all suspect the reason is that the publicly owned company would beat the private ones hands down on service standards and investment for the simple reason that it would not be seeking to make profit for shareholders.

In order that Labour can be forced to do so and thus put public need before private greed, ASLEF members – along with members of other unions – need to acquaint themselves with an understanding of the bigger arguments behind the case for public ownership.

This means having an understanding of the arguments for a socialised market and those against neo-liberalism.

It has been the capture of Labour by neo-liberalism that produced 'new' Labour and made it so unwilling to yield to any ideas that curtail the operation of the 'free market'.

WHAT ARE NEO-LIBERALISM AND SOCIAL MARKETS?

Neo-liberalism represents the rediscovery and championing of the ideas of economic liberalism that Adam Smith wrote about in the *Wealth of Nations* in 1776. The argument here is that markets are the best and most rational way to distribute resources and match supply with demand.

Economic liberalism was dominant in the west until the 1930s. But the Wall Street

crash and the ensuing Great Depression as well as the emergence of fascism led to the dominance of a new idea, Keynesian (after John Maynard Keynes).

Keynesian was defined by two things above all others. First, the state should intervene to even out the boom and slumps of unregulated capitalism (aka economic liberalism) for reasons of political and economic stability. This could be done by nationalisation and welfare state provision.

The second component was that the state should more heavily tax in times of growth and spend more heavily during times of slump. So Keynesian was about regulating the market and socialising it for the benefit of wider numbers of people.

STATE INTERVENTION: YES OR NO?

But come the 1970s, the huge economic crisis then was laid at the door of Keynesianism. Keynesian was fundamentally accused of 'crowding out' the market by reducing the opportunities to invest and this was leading to a declining rate of profitability.

In other words, state action was argued to be too widespread and the way to resolve the issue was by returning to a small state and let the market work unhindered.

This return to liberalism – this time called neo-liberalism – was led by Thatcher and has continued under 'new' Labour.

But Keynesian did not lead to the economic crisis of the 1970s. Rather, it was the underlying dynamics of capitalism that caused the crisis – dynamics that Keynesian could not change.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER FOR ASLEF?

So what's the relevance of this for ASLEF and the rail industry?

It is that if we want the creation of a rail network which puts need before profit, we also need to see that the rest of the economy also has to be similarly reformed

too.

A railway system on its own under public ownership will still be limited and hamstrung by an economy run on free market principles. It will be cash and resources starved and face competition from other forms of transport.

So first stop after the creation of a rail network under public ownership is that all public transport is operated on a similarly not-for-profit basis.

And then after that we need other key parts of the economy – like the utilities – to be changed in the same way.

Only then can we begin to move away from an unregulated form of capitalism which is based on the unholy trinity of being i) unplanned and uncoordinated, ii) about competition, not cooperation, and iii) based on private greed, not public need.

WE CAN CHAMPION THE NEEDY

So to put it in a nutshell – the return of the railways to public ownership necessarily needs wider political action to do the same elsewhere.

This means the rejection of neo-liberalism and the move to a socialised economy based on something like Keynesianism or social democracy (the proper name for 'old Labour' policies). It must also mean the defeat of 'new' Labour.

Unfortunately, the recent financial bailouts by Brown do not represent Keynesianism. Just because they have been carried out by the state, this should not obscure the reality that they have been market led responses to market created problems.

It is the system of neo-liberalism Brown has tried to save, not the people from the affects of neo-liberalism.

ASLEF is in a good position to play its part in defeating 'new' Labour and championing the cause of public provision for public need.

But what the union needs more than anything else here is the active involvement of all its members in this important task.



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FROTHY CAPPUCCINO – OR A SAFE RAILWAY?

'Frothy cappuccino – or a safe railway?'

That was the question posed on tens of thousands of leaflets distributed at stations all over the country by ASLEF members last month. The union was taking part in the International Transport Federation (ITF) rail safety day on 28 April.

The leaflets publicised the fact that the government has put aside £30 billion to build more shops and cafes so that stations will look nicer – while Network Rail (which is owned by the government) – decided to cut the frequency of track inspections and routine signals maintenance by a staggering 28%. We asked commuters, 'Would you sooner have a supermarket in the station – or someone servicing the track and the signals?'

We called on rail minister Lord Adonis to insist that Network Rail carries out all the maintenance and safety work it had planned on the network during 2009 – and to fund it if necessary.

'Network Rail planned that work because it believes it is necessary for passenger



General Secretary Keith Norman and EC President Alan Donnelly laid a wreath at the memorial at Euston Station which mourns all those who have died on our railways

safety.

It is utterly irresponsible to drop it now in order to save money,' said general secretary Keith Norman.

We asked passengers who shared our view to drop Lord Adonis an email (andrew.adonis@df.gov.uk) and to ask their local MP to support Stroud MP David Drew's call in Parliament to reverse the cuts.

● **London ITF Day Photos: Els Dekker**



Commuters at St Pancras seemed rather more amenable to taking leaflets than those at Liverpool Street. Or perhaps this team just looked as if they weren't taking no for an answer ...



ASLEF members handed out leaflets to commuters departing from London's Waterloo station on the evening of 28 April. Some passengers who missed out on a leaflet as they entered the station were given a second chance when they got onto their train!



ASLEF leaflets were handed out at Birmingham New Street station on 28 April by members of the CrossCountry and London Midlands Company Councils. Seen here are Alan Griffiths, Miles Bidgood, Ian Clarke, District Secretary Mick Whelan, John Hay and Dave Sullivan. Ian Clarke and Bill Goode were with other colleagues covering a different entrance reports CrossCountry Secretary **John Hay**



BRISTOL: Activists from our Bristol branch had a successful day and were joined by members of local transport pressure group FOSBR. Branch Secretary Bernard Kennedy (left in photo with Peter Gould from FOSBR) says the leaflets met with 'a positive response'.



Early morning commuters arriving at London's Liverpool Street Station were met by a full team of ASLEF members passing on the message about cancelled rail maintenance. 'The only worrying thing,' said Finn Brennan, 'was when you drew attention to the leaflets by calling out, 'Rail Safety' – and people said, 'No thanks!'



DONCASTER: Kevin Beresford convinces a passenger that safety matters more than caffeine! The branch was pleased to welcome members of the RMT who joined in the leafleting.



... and after a few hours campaigning for a safe railway, we all went and had a cappuccino!

SAFETY WORKS



Safety is right at the top of ASLEF's priority list. Our wages, hours of work and shift patterns are all important – but we can only enjoy the fruits of our labour if we have our health. That is why this month we have put together this feature on safety which includes the work of those real unsung heroes, our local reps, how issues are dealt with at headquarters, what hazards you should look out for – and what you can do to help. I believe these pages are important. I hope you will find them useful. Look after yourself – and your colleagues.

Keith Norman – General Secretary

ACTIVITY AT HEAD OFFICE ... WHEN SAFETY GOES NATIONAL ...

It is perhaps surprising that until the 1999 Ladbroke Grove crash, ASLEF had no-one at Head Office specifically dealing with safety. It now has two dedicated health and safety staff – Dave Bennett and Panyin Ewusi-Aikin – who form part of the Head Office Industrial Relations Department.

HOW ARE ISSUES PROGRESSED?

When a branch writes in with a resolution for the Executive Committee (EC), it is always acknowledged and referred to an Officer, the General Secretary, or the National Organiser. They decide if it should be listed for the EC's attention, and will ask for a report from the lead negotiator about the issue.

A briefing is drawn up for the EC who decide what action is needed. Progressing issues is the job of the Head Office Health and Safety staff. Last month, for example, the EC were asked to approve amendments to First Great Western's 'Competence Development Process', which it did, subject to the involvement of the Company Council.

Head Office staff then notified management of the decision and cleared a circular with an Officer before it was sent out to branches and reps.

WHAT ELSE DO THE HEAD OFFICE HEALTH AND SAFETY PEOPLE DO?

As well as progressing issues rising from branches, the Health and Safety Department

- writes briefings for Officers and EC members who attend safety meetings
- drafts responses to consultation documents from bodies like the Railway Safety and Standards Board (RSSB), the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR), Network Rail and the Department for Transport (DfT)
- attends and puts the ASLEF case at specialist meetings such as the TUC Union Health and Safety Specialist Group (UHSS), the TUC UHSS Gender Occupational Safety and Health Group (GOSH), the Parliamentary Advisory Committee on Transport Safety rail working party (PACTS)
- runs workshops, and supports the ASLEF delegation, at the National Hazards Conference which this year takes places at Manchester University
- attends and has given a presentation at the RSSB Risk Management Conference, Nottingham University
- writes ASLEF booklets on Health and Safety
- Dave Bennett is also the TUC representative on the BSI committee HS/1 Occupational Health & Safety Management

SAFETY IN THE DEPOT ...

'I think being a safety rep is one of the most important jobs in the union,' says Khalid Rana, who carries out this function at Gidea Park. 'We not only keep safety to the forefront of people's minds – we also show members that the union is active, useful and positive.'

Key to his work is the monthly round of the depot Khalid carries out with manager Chris Travers. 'We are able to identify potential hazards like walkways with raised paving stones, track issues, rotten sleepers, rails out of alignment or lighting that could

cause problems.

'Each potential hazard is given a fault number which puts pressure on Network Rail to remedy it quickly – and in the worse case gives us concrete evidence so our members are assured of compensation if there is an accident.'

He puts up notices on his home-made safety board before the monthly tour and invites members to raise any problems they might have encountered. 'Most of our drivers are safety conscious,' Khalid says. 'In our job, we have to be.'

He says local managers and safety reps should work as a team – as he does –

Employees of the Belgian railway company Infrabel handed out leaflets last month to raise awareness of the public to the dangers of straying onto the track. Every passenger entering Brussels station was handed a pamphlet bearing the slogan, 'A step on the line is a foot in the grave'.



ASLEF'S STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO RAISING A HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUE

- Raise your concern with management first verbally, and then in writing.
- Keep a copy of this correspondence for yourself, and make sure you give one to your local health and safety rep
- Follow up with both management and your safety rep what action is being taken to remedy the situation
- If either you or your Safety rep is not satisfied with the response from management, the Safety rep can refer the matter to your District Organiser. From there it will go to the Company Joint Safety Committee.

A variation to this approach is if you want to raise a safety issue but you don't trust your local managers. In this case you can get in touch with the Confidential Incident Reporting and Analysis System for the UK railway industry – CIRAS.

CIRAS is an independent and confidential way to report safety concerns without fear of recrimination. If you submit a report of a potential hazard to them, they will contact a representative of the company. Please make sure you keep your Safety rep informed of what you are doing.

They will examine the response (which do not contain any identifying information) and get back to you. This can take eight weeks, but during this period you can phone CIRAS to see how your report is progressing.

CIRAS covers all train and freight operating companies. You can contact them by calling the freephone number 0800 0850 449, by writing to Freepost CIRAS or by texting 07507 285887. The CIRAS website is www.ciras.org.uk

ON MANY LEVELS



Khalid says being a safety rep can be a productive and rewarding experience pic: Els Dekker.

because they have shared interests. 'In the most basic terms, we want our members protected and they want their drivers fit for work.'

However it does not always run smoothly. Khalid is increasingly an expert in his field and has, with the union's help, been studying for formal qualifications. This means in the case of a major problem he knows how to use the law. 'A couple of years back I used Regulation Eight - which covers 'serious and imminent danger' - to close a sidings for a few months. At the moment, because of deficient lighting, we have 75 'temporary' lights installed at Gidea Park.'

Khalid says his training for the

HOT SAFETY ISSUES FOR DRIVERS

The five main issues that health and safety reps have raised with us - and so the things that drivers should be especially aware of - are ...

- Slips, trips and falls - a constant hazard in the driving environment
- Back strains, noise and vibration - from inadequate cabs that need to be reported
- Sleep disorders - from shift work and roster patterns
- Line fatalities - which we can't prevent, but we can ensure our members are counselled and assisted fully before returning to work
- Stress - which is often the result of a hectoring and unsympathetic management

Occupational Health and Safety Diploma has been challenging but means he now sees potential hazards that wouldn't have seemed obvious to him when he first joined the industry as a booking clerk. 'I had the safety

rep role wished upon me - but I'm glad I did,' he says. 'It's a good feeling for me and the other drivers when we see something fixed that we've raised. It's good for members and it's ASLEF in action.'

MAKING OUR WORKING LIVES SAFE CAN WIN FRIENDS

says **National Organiser Simon Weller**

Making our working lives safe is ASLEF's number one priority - but it can also help us to gain allies throughout the rail community. When we argue for change that makes train travel safer, the public are right behind us. They want to arrive at their destination safely as much as we do.

It is an issue we can employ to build links and alliances with the whole rail community, and to improve our union's image with the public generally.

It is a sad fact that trade unions only get into the media when either they are striking, falling out with the Labour Party or falling out with themselves. When was the last time you saw a newspaper report commending a union

for the positive things we do - like defending a falsely accused person, supporting needy fellow workers or arguing for an end to discrimination? When is the last time you saw a television report about the selfless work carried out by one of ASLEF's many unpaid local officers?

It doesn't happen. The positive things we do are not news - it is the negative ones that hit the headlines. The public thinks we have our own selfish agenda.

Safety is a way of breaking down these false barriers.

One of the most heartening gatherings on last month's Rail Safety Day was at Bristol Temple Meads. Branch Secretary Bernard Kennedy told FOSBR, the rail user group

campaigning to improve services and facilities on Bristol's suburban lines, about the event - and they turned up to help distribute our leaflets.

The implications of Network Rail's plans to cut track maintenance and renewals are a threat to everyone's safety - passenger, driver and staff. We can use this type of issue to organise ourselves better by building our alliances. Branches may want to consider

- contacting user groups to let them know about the positive steps we are taking in this area as well as reinforcing relationships with these groups.
- telling local media about improved safety features that have occurred because of trade union action.

TRAILBLAZER CELINE IS STILL HOOKED ON RAIL

BACK in April 1979 Celine Roberts saw an advert in her local north London paper seeking recruits to become trainee train drivers. 'Do you want to earn £100 a week?' it asked. 'I thought that would be good,' she says. 'I could buy myself a car on that money. It was certainly a lot more than I was getting hairdressing.'

It was the start of a path that led her to 'the best job I've ever had', and to a life-long fascination with railways.

At that time train driving was seen as a very male occupation, but Celine wasn't put off by that. 'I'd always been a bit of a tom-boy,' she says. 'And while some of the younger drivers looked at me a bit suspiciously, the older ones were always helpful and polite. I was only 22, and they treated me like a daughter. They were always telling me stories about the 'good old days of steam'.'

She started on the footplate at Ripple Lane where she was the only woman – with the rather inappropriate title of



The Magnificent Seven : Karen Harrison, Celine (then Rocchia), Ann Winter, Sarah Wainwright, Tina Whybrow, Sandra Baldwin and Tricia Roche

'second man'! After training at Stratford and Liverpool Street ('Where I learned things like coupling-up') she began working out of Victoria.

'I didn't think it was all that strange to be a woman driver,' she says. 'It was just a job that I loved more all the time. Perhaps it was different for the

men who saw this first female 'invasion'.'

But if Celine was unfazed, the national media was not. In 1981, shortly before she qualified as a driver, she was asked to attend a photo-shoot with six other women while attendant reporters pondered the bizarre prospect of a female

driving a train. 'I think I was the second of the group to qualify,' she says. 'But we heard rumours that a woman beat us to it in Scotland. I don't know if that was true or not.'

Celine's first trip as a driver was a night run to Brighton. 'I remember them all winding me up in the mess-room before I set off, saying it was getting foggy and getting worse. They always did things like that. It was part of going to work.'

There weren't many facilities for women drivers in those early days and she remembers having to hurry over a lonely bridge at Victoria to use the loos they made available in the office. 'I remember being asked at my interview what I'd do if I needed to go to the loo on a run. I said I'd hold on!'

Celine says she was quite proud of her uniform. 'I usually opted for a skirt, but most of the girls went for trousers. Uniforms give you a sense of belonging, and I always felt safer when I was wearing it going along the quiet bits you always get at stations.'

Eventually Celine moved to Marylebone where Karen and Sandra, two of the seven women in the press photo, were also headed. 'We thought it would be good to have a few women at the same depot,' she says. She hadn't been there long when she met her union rep – 'Everyone joined ASLEF as a matter of course in those days' – and he sorted out some sick pay for her and found her a locker.

'Since then he's also found me a house and become the dad of our seven children!' she says. This is husband Jim who is now a Train Crew Supervisor.

It was at Marylebone that Celine had her next 'brush with fame' when she was chosen as the driver for a short film, now a DVD, shot from the cab along the Banbury run with its old signals. 'It's a drivers' eye view, called 'Chiltern Take Two'. I enjoyed doing that. It costs £20 on eBay!'

She kept working after having her first child, but then realised it wasn't going to be possible to continue when the next two arrived together. 'It was a wrench to have to leave. I still think fondly about those



She may have given up driving trains, but now Celine spends hours carefully creating layouts for fellow enthusiasts



In front of an ASLEF logo, Celine with the man who was her union rep during the '82 strike!

ten years on the footplate.'

The proof of this is her current 'obsession' with train modelling. She's getting so good at creating layouts for models that she's sold two, the last to a collector in Scotland. 'I go to modelling clubs and shows and other rail events.' She chuckles at herself. 'You've got to have a hobby or you'd get bored to death or become very dull.

'Mind you, I haven't persuaded the rest of the family. Jim thinks I'm potty and I have to bribe the children before they'll come with me!'

Celine likes to have a goal – which is why when she was driving trains she also passed her heavy goods vehicle licence. 'I never drove articulated lorries for a living but I keep up my HGV qualification. I suppose I'm a bit of a collector. I got all my railway files photocopied and sent to me and I used to have hundreds of railway books around the house. I like to have something to occupy my mind. I wouldn't mind building a model train track in the garden, but Jim's ... well, not keen!'

Celine says all her memories of her driving days are positive.



Karen, Sandra and Celine at the old shed of Marylebone's 'women's outpost' in 1988



Railways are never far from the Roberts' home ...

'Even things like the cats,' she says.

'The cats?'

'Those big cats you see by the side of the tracks when you drive trains. Huge things.' She stops. 'You don't believe me, do you? Well, that's because you've never driven a train.

'I'm glad I can say I have. I had a lot of good times, and very few bad ones.'



Getting ready to hit the track – at a training session in the early '80s

WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO

In 1909 ASLEF was distinctly unhappy with an arbitration ruling while fifty years later non-members came in for a regal roasting ...

100 YEARS AGO

In the June 1909 Journal, F.W.Brewer's Monthly Comments said that a recent arbitration was a blunder, unfair and utterly wrong.

"We have no wish to perpetrate a pun, but we cannot help saying that the London and North-Western arbitration award appears to be, metaphorically speaking, more or less a case of "going from the "Fry" –ing pan into the fire". Under the award, a number of locomotive firemen are left, apparently, to "Fry" in their own fat, owing to their increased wages rate being based on the total heating surface, instead of on the size of the fire-grate, of the engines on which they may be employed. The responsibility for this blunder, probably, does not rest with Sir Edward Fry himself. If, however, the London and North-Western award is calculated to cause a certain degree of unfairness, then the Midland Railway award is certain to inflict a very much greater measure of injustice, for the simple reason that it probably affects a larger body of firemen. The Earl of Cromer, the arbitrator in the Midland case, followed Sir Edward's lead as regards heating surface in relation to firemen's wages. That is to say, he awarded 3d. extra per day to all firemen employed on Midland Railway engines having over 1,500 sq.ft. of heating surface. Now, if the men are entitled to this small increase at all, they are entitled to it on an accurate basis. The trouble is that the present basis is wrong - utterly."

50 YEARS AGO

Toram Beg's 'Scottish Opinion' column in the 1959 Journal had a few uncompromising views on 'nons' ...

"I can never understand the nonsense which is handed out on the subject of the non-trade-unionist – the fellow who declares that his "principles" will not allow him to become a member of the trade union which looks after the interests of those who work at his craft.

When the "non" is being discussed on the radio, in the Press, or during a session by people in the public eye, all of them seem to be tumbling over themselves to try and do what they describe as "understand the point of view" of this type of individual. The tender regard everybody seems to have for his "principles" and what they say has always the same reaction on my mind.

I just want to say one word in reply – "Boloney".

D'ye know why?

Because in no case have their arguments in favour of the continuing existence of the non-unionist been based on common-sense – let alone logic and cold reason.

I listen to phrases like "the closed shop", "freedom of the individual", "coercion" and "compulsion", and am quite convinced that nine out of every ten who use these phrases have never given a thought to what they really imply. In a word, they are mentally "muscle-bound", or maybe "phrase-drugged" is a better description."

*Extracts selected and edited
by Jane Pimlott*

OVARIAN CANCER - WE NEED TO RAISE AWARENESS

says **Deborah Reay**, *Women's Representative Committee Member for District 8*

TALKING to other women at this year's Women's TUC conference made us very aware how ignorant most people are to the symptoms of this disease.

The UK has one of the worst ovarian cancer survival rates in the developed world. Three out of every four women are only diagnosed with the disease once it has spread significantly - and by that time survival rates have fallen dramatically.

However, it is not all doom and gloom. Researchers in America have found that nearly all the women who had been diagnosed with the disease had displayed symptoms very early on when survival rates can be as high as 90%. Therefore, raising awareness is imperative.

Symptoms are sometimes difficult to detect because they are often similar to those caused by more common, less serious illnesses. The more common ones include

- Persistent pelvic and stomach pain
- Persistent bloating
- Difficulty eating and feeling full quickly
- Frequent urgent need to urinate

It is important to note that these are just a few of the symptoms and anything that is not usual for you should be investigated.

Ovarian Cancer Action have produced a four-week 'symptoms diary' which can be downloaded from www.ovarian.org.uk/pdf/SymptomDiary.pdf

OVARIAN CANCER FACTS

- There is no screening test for Ovarian Cancer, although there



are trials underway.

- It is the fifth most common cancer amongst women.
- Currently, two thirds of women diagnosed will die of the disease.
- 90% of ovarian cancers are not 'familial'. This means that most women will not have any family history of this cancer, so they may not be aware of symptoms and risk factors.
- Cervical smears do NOT detect Ovarian Cancer
- A blood test called CA125 is used together with a transvaginal ultrasound scan to test women who may be at a higher risk, however, CA125 levels can be affected by other less serious conditions.

For further information or to make a donation contact Ovarian Cancer Action www.ovarian.org.uk

Although Ovarian Cancer is only found in women, men can't afford to be complacent. Nearly everybody will have a woman in their lives, be it a wife, sister daughter or mother. If they are displaying any of the symptoms listed above, encourage them to seek assistance as quickly as possible. You could save their life.

Deborah Reay

Womens Representative Committee Member District 8



THREE REASONS TO JOIN ASLEF! Wendy, Gillian and Deborah launch the Shocking Pink Party!

ASLEF WARNINGS AT 'POSITIVE' WOMEN'S TUC

reports *Women's Representative Committee Secretary Wendy Hurst*

THE union's main contribution at this year's Women's TUC (WTUC) was our highlighting the issue of ovarian cancer. The WTUC has always been a successful conference for the ASLEF delegation and this year was no exception.

ASLEF had two motions at the March conference. One, concerning family friendly rights, was composed by the WTUC committee and was seconded by Sister Deborah Reay at her first conference. The union's second motion - on raising awareness of Ovarian Cancer - was moved by Sister Gillian McVitte. During the conference ASLEF delegates also spoke in support of motions on flexible working, maternal death rates in developing countries, campaigning against the far right, and gender sensitive health, safety and welfare. All our motions were adopted by the conference. Others delegations approached the delegation, and we were sorry that we did not have time to assist them all.

A guest speaker from the Federation of Cuban Women, Carolina Amador Perez, gave an outline of the roles Cuban women play in the politics of her country.

ASLEF held a 'pink party' to raise awareness of female related cancers on the Wednesday evening, which proved both successful and enjoyable. We also managed to raise some funds to support Ovarian Cancer Action, Target Ovarian Cancer and Macmillan cancer support.

The WTUC agreed to send a motion on 'Women and the Global economic crisis' to be debated at the main TUC congress. Women are still employed in some of the lowest paid jobs which are usually the first to go in a recession.

ASLEF's successes in the week were made even sweeter when Sister Pauline Cawood was once again elected to the Women's TUC committee.

Finally I'd like to pass on my thanks to all at ASLEF for their assistance in the run-up to conference, and thanks to Bro. S Grant for his support at conference.

Well-done sisters! Yet again we can be proud of the work we do to support our union.

● *This year's WTUC delegates were sisters Deborah Reay (D8), Gillian McVitte (D2, National Chair) Pauline Cawood (D4) and Wendy Hurst (D5, National Secretary).*

WOMEN STILL PAID LESS THAN MEN Almost 40 years since the Equal Pay Act became law in 1970, women are paid on average 23% less per hour than men. The gap for part time women is even more shocking - over 36%. The government has now begun work on a new Equality Act which will be 'written in plain English to make it easier for individuals and employers to understand their legal rights and obligations'. Part of it will require businesses to report on gender pay. It is expected to come into force in 2012.

AYLESBURY SAYS FAREWELL TO DYNAMIC DUO

THE good news is in the last few years we have seen lots of new drivers coming on board at Aylesbury. It continues to be as vibrant a depot as ever – which is just as well because the bad news is we are losing two very good men who are retiring: Dickie Park and Phil Morrell. This pair will be missed by us all, both older and new Drivers.

Phil Morrell has held several Branch positions at Aylesbury. His last position was as Chairman, a position he held until up the end of last year. We cannot thank him enough for his time, dedication and the very down-to-earth approach and wise guidance he brought to our meetings. Phil retired in

May and will be sorely missed. His railway career started in 1970 at Worcester where he was a guard. He transferred in 1972 to Westbury where he joined the line of promotion. He took his rules in Bristol with a fellow workmate named Ken Scriven in 1974 and became a Driver before transferring to Aylesbury. Phil has done 38 years on the railway.

Phil is quite a character and always entertaining whether he was talking about union work, his love of steam engines or the miles of editing he has undertaken for his videos. He is also quite an historian on the quiet but would never admit to it. It seemed you would find

him most weekends travelling somewhere in the country to photograph or video steam engines. Phil is a true railwayman through and through and anyone who has ever seen his videoing will testify it reflects his love of the railways. These videos can still be purchased, by the way.

'Dickie Park from Stonebridge Park' as we all like to warmly call him, retired in April. He's another great character who will be sorely missed. Dickie started as a guard at Wolverhampton in 1980 and was there for nine years before moving to Stonebridge Park to become a Driver. I remember him myself

as we were both there at the same time. I distinctly remember how he seemed to fit in immediately as a seasoned goods driver as though he had always been there. Dickie was always very dependable and professional at what he did.

Dick moved to London Marylebone and spent a further eight years there before moving finally to Aylesbury. Everybody got along with Dick. He was that kind of fellow. He will be sorely missed by everyone at Aylesbury and Marylebone.

Both these comrades were the salt that makes up our great industry.

Jim Gillard – Secretary –
Aylesbury Branch



Preston at Arkwright (left to right) Graham Fazackerley, John McCrimmon, Gary Mawdsley, Paul Harnett, Dave Cowling and Tony Beard.

NORTH WEST, ARKWRIGHT'S BEST...

PRESTON branch would like to thank ASLEF for our recent visit to Head Office.

For the majority of those present it was their first visit to Hampstead's Arkwright Road, and they were amazed at the size and complexity of the building and at the too-numerous-to-name, trophies, badges and paintings that adorn the brightly decorated walls all around the building.

They thoroughly enjoyed the tour around the different departments and they got to see first hand how our union is run, from the General Secretary and Executive team, right down to how the Industrial Relations, Finance and Administrative departments work.

At the end of the tour, Keith Norman treated us all to a drink and a splendid meal.

Many thanks to all those at ASLEF for an enjoyable day.

Graham Fazackerley
Secretary – Preston Branch

BLETCHLEY'S TOUGH-GUY CHARITY TACTICS

FUND raising for charity knows no bounds at Bletchley branch! This year members of the branch have taken part in two charitable events: the Tough Guy challenge organised by Bletchley Driver Mike Thorne and a sponsored walk in aid of Coventry Driver Anita Chilton.

Mike Thorne decided the Tough Guy event – billed as 'the world's most demanding one-day survival ordeal' – would be a great way to raise money for Alzheimer's Research, a charity close to his heart as his mum has been suffering with the disease for many years.

Mike says, 'I put an eight-man team together last summer (The 'Unincredibles') including five drivers from London Midland's Bletchley and Northampton depots.

We trained regularly for the event this February. We had to! The event is basically an eight-mile cross-country assault course which involves risking barbed wire, cuts, scrapes, burns, dehydration, hypothermia, acrophobia, claustrophobia, sprains, twists, joint dislocation, broken bones – and death! Before running the course you must sign a 'Death Warrant' which states that you accept the risks and cannot claim in the case of injury.

'When we approached our local ASLEF branch for

sponsorship, they promptly gave us £100 and sent letters to branches asking for help.

We had a fantastic response and received sponsorship of £415 which helped with the cost of mini-bus hire, team t-shirts and also a substantial contribution to our charity fund total – which currently stands at £1760.

'The event certainly lived up to its name. With between 5-6,000 competitors it was chaos. Also it snowed and temperatures dropped to minus eight with the wind chill.

'We managed to get the whole team round the course with relatively few tears and only a few cuts and grazes. It was hard going but we spent most of the day with huge muddy grins on our faces.

'On behalf of our team I would like to say a massive thanks to everyone who sponsored or supported us.'

The second challenge event took place when late last year the Branch received the ASLEF appeal from Birmingham New Street Branch for Sister Anita Chilton, a train driver at Coventry who suffers from Temporomandibular disease. Because branch funds were depleted from donating to appeals throughout the year, they organised a sponsored walk to raise funds.

REUNION AT HARTLEPOOL SHED

ALTHOUGH the ASLEF branch closed in 1983, the Hartlepool Shed continue to hold reunions for active and retired members. The last was held on April 11 – and it was organised by the retired branch secretary Mathew Daley, who will be 89 next month.

'Matty' started work on the LNER on April 8, 1935 in the carriage and wagon department at Hartlepool fish quay, oiling wagons' wheels and screwing couplings, box wagon door runners and suspension wheels.

In April 1936 he applied for a job as a cleaner lad at West Hartlepool loco depot and in June was summoned to take a test of general knowledge and maths. Thirty-two applicants took the test in the mess room and Matty was one of four who were engaged. Sadly Matty is the only one still living.

He changed from the NUR to ASLEF and became very active.

He began by collecting dues and Labour Party subscriptions and became West Hartlepool branch secretary in 1943 – a position he retained for 28 years. He served as secretary of the LDC and BRSA until the depot closed.

Matty keeps active playing bowls and assisting the Labour party in Hartlepool, being particularly involved in elections and residents associations in Grange ward.

For many years the Hartlepool reunions have been held at the Princess Helena public house. The landlord always spoils us all – perhaps because he was the shed van driver! When they first started, the reunions attracted 30-40 railwaymen but numbers have depleted over the years. Around 20 were at the April event, covering all fields of railway life – signalmen, guards, supervisors and of course drivers.

One guest was ex-driver Vic



The branch has gone but the reunions go on! The next Hartlepool reunion is in October

Burton who was not only active in ASLEF, but also became a local and county councillor, Mayor of Hartlepool and is now an Alderman of the Borough of Hartlepool. Unfortunately H. J. Bishop wasn't well enough to attend but he too was an active member of ASLEF, local councillor, Mayor of Hartlepool and an Alderman. D. Bentley was another active branch member who served as a local councillor.

Most of the retired men are approaching or in their '80s and Matty organises two reunions a year because he says, 'There's a chance some of us won't be able to get to one.'

Good humour, banter and memories – not to mention the beverage! – flowed throughout the evening. Finally thanks to our host, landlord Peter Fletcher for his facilities and hospitality.

Geoff Burton – Secretary – Thornaby Branch



Paddington bade a fond farewell to Bro Norman Musgrove at its April meeting.

NORMAN JOINS 'BIGGEST BRANCH'

THE largest turnout in recent memory attended the April Paddington Branch meeting, which was also saying a fond farewell to Bro Norman Musgrove, who has taken early retirement.

Norman has been an ASLEF member for over 45 years, and has been a stalwart of Paddington Branch and Depot (including Old Oak Common) for much of that time. Among those present to say a fond farewell were EC Member Brian Corbett, District Organiser Stan Moran and RMS Secretary Tony West, as well as a large number of colleagues.

Tony gave a well received report and welcomed Norman into ASLEF's 'biggest branch', before making a presentation to Norman on behalf of the Branch.

Stan Moran also presented ASLEF long service awards totalling over 240 years. Enjoy your retirement Norman. Sundays will never be the same!

Stephen Austin – Secretary - Paddington Branch

THE RETIRING SILVER FOX OF ARNOS GROVE

BRO JOHN ROBSON - aka 'The Silver Fox' – is taking early retirement after unfortunately failing his medical to return to driving. It was typical of him that he pretended he hadn't failed and would shortly be picking up on the early turn.

John has served the union and membership since July 1971 in roles including local level rep. Trains Functional Council Secretary and Chairman of Arnos Grove branch. He was also politically active for many years and his early strong stance against racism and any discrimination was always to be commended. In addition, his experience as a Trustee of the TFL pension fund was of assistance to many - including myself.

Activists and members outside District 8 will remember John's long participation at ASLEF AADs where his contributions always contained a witheringly funny sense of black humour.

He was widely respected by other unions as well as management - though he could be highly critical of the stupidity of some of the latter.

I am sure everyone who met him, those he helped, those he worked with and all his comrades will wish him well in his retirement.

Steve Grant – Organiser - District Eight



THE RAMSGATE CLASS OF 2009 Branch secretary Dave Bull mustered the Ramsgate members who attended the 2009 reunion at the Red Arrow club into the car park for a 'Class of 2009' photo. Conspicuously absent was Ron Barratt who normally organises the gathering. Unfortunately he has been called to 'serve in the top link' since we last met, but his wife and her merry band of volunteers ensured the show would go on. In my opinion they did Ron proud.

Once again thanks for the welcome, the food and the club staff who ensured none of us went home dry.

It was good to see some new faces in the crowd. We need our younger colleagues to come on out and join us – so don't be shy - we don't bite! Why not come to the Ramsgate reunions arranged for 2nd July at Tonbridge and 1st October at Rainham. Both begin at 1100 and are open to anyone who works, or did work, on the Southern.

And don't forget to dig deep when you're supporting the raffle!

Peter Smith – Reporter - RMS

TWO DEPARTURES FROM JUBILEE EAST

IT WAS a packed Branch meeting the General Secretary, Keith Norman, found himself in when he came to make presentations to two members who were leaving the employ of LUL. Ray Valentine and Steve King were not leaving because of age because both are far from retirement age but because of ill health in Ray Valentine's case and personal reasons in the case of Steve King.

Both were popular at North Greenwich depot and indeed, on the Line as a whole and this was reflected in the turnout at the Branch meeting and the

social drink that followed. It is sad to see such stalwarts leave the job.

In his address, the General Secretary spoke of the comradeship of members of ASLEF, how in times of need they were willing to help and indeed, make sacrifice to help other colleagues. He was thinking particularly of the help in one of the F.O.C. companies where members had prevented their company making redundancies.

Keith also spoke with pride about the way the Society had turned itself around financially and was now in the black.

Because of the time factor, both the Level 1 report and the Trades Council report were curtailed and both representatives had prepared their reports in writing for the perusal by members.

The Branch heard how the management were failing to keep to agreements and also failing to deal expeditiously with complaints within the machinery. They passed a resolution calling on the E.C. to conduct a ballot of our members at the two depots on the east end of the line.

Mike Beck- Reporter – Jubilee East Branch

35 year badge

IT WAS an honour and a privilege for me to present Gary Daish with his 35 year badge at the April Ordinary meeting of the Portsmouth and Isle of Wight Branch.

Gary Daish comes from a traditional railway background as his father was also a train driver at Fratton. Gary has served Fratton Depot well for many years as a Local Level and Health & Safety rep. His stories about the railway are legendary in the mess - especially when the subject of the Crompton Locomotive is being discussed. As the 'Crompton' holds such a special place in his heart, he has been known to talk for hours about its workings, especially to new Drivers, be it at work or socially.

It has been a bonus for the Branch to have such a witty and dedicated member.

John Glazebrook – Secretary - Portsmouth & IOW Branch



IOW Secretary John Glazebrook makes the presentation to Gary Daish

DISTRICT 7 WEEKEND FORUM - 9/10 OCTOBER

District 7 is organising a weekend forum at the New Continental Hotel, Millbay Rd, Plymouth on 9/10 October. Please contact District Organiser Stan Moran for details (smoran@aslef.org.uk) or send a £20 deposit to Stan at 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB to secure a booking at this top-class 3-star hotel. All are welcome.

Speakers are to be confirmed, but the room prices are £75 for a double or twin with B&B, £65 for a single with B&B or £60 for a room for one or two.



The GS spoke of comradeship at the Jubilee East branch

REG CLARK – NOTHING BROKE HIS SPIRIT

It is with sadness that I report the death of Reg Clark, formerly of London Bridge, Ripple Lane, Kings Cross and maybe others that I don't know of.

Reg moved to Peterborough at the latter part of his driving career where he fitted in and became a 'Boongate'. Although he was the 'new boy' he soon became a regular branch attender, right up to the time he took resettlement in 1994.

Unfortunately, he suffered a stroke about three years ago and was restricted to a mobility scooter. Despite this, it did not break his spirit or his sense of humour.

He was a true railway character who I saw frequently since he became less mobile and he always spoke with passion about his family, the railways and motorbikes. In fact he was carried to the crematorium on a side-car.

We offer condolences to his family at their loss of a caring father and grandfather. Reg will be remembered fondly by all those who knew him.

DON BATES – RMS member

JOHN MARSDEN – A GOOD MAN GONE

John started his footplate career as a cleaner at Skipton. After the depot closed he transferred to Leeds Holbeck as a Fireman, and gained his Driver's job at Blackburn in 1968.

When he was made redundant again just two years later John came south to sunny Ramsgate in 1971. He must have liked the sea air, as he settled here and finally retired at Ramsgate.

In John's last few days Arthur Walkiden, another of our

retired members, visited John in the Thanet Hospice. As they chatted, John mentioned to Arthur that he was due his 50 year medallion. With the help of our wonderful Admin department, who arranged for John's badge to be sent to me, we hoped that John would be fit enough to attend our reunion at Ramsgate so we could make a presentation. Sadly John passed away just the day after it arrived. Mick Neary managed to get it to John's son who was extremely proud to receive it on John's behalf.

My favorite memory of John was when we were sitting in the mess room on the night that John Major was re-elected. The telly was switched on during shunts and showed one grinning Tory after another winning their seats, and with it we knew that the privatisation of the railways would soon follow.

John summed it up a treat for me as silence settled on the mess room. 'Well it looks like we have a fight on our hands now,' he declared. 'And if that's what they want - that's what they'll get!'

We could do with a few more John Marsdens today!

DAVE BULL – Secretary – Ramsgate Branch

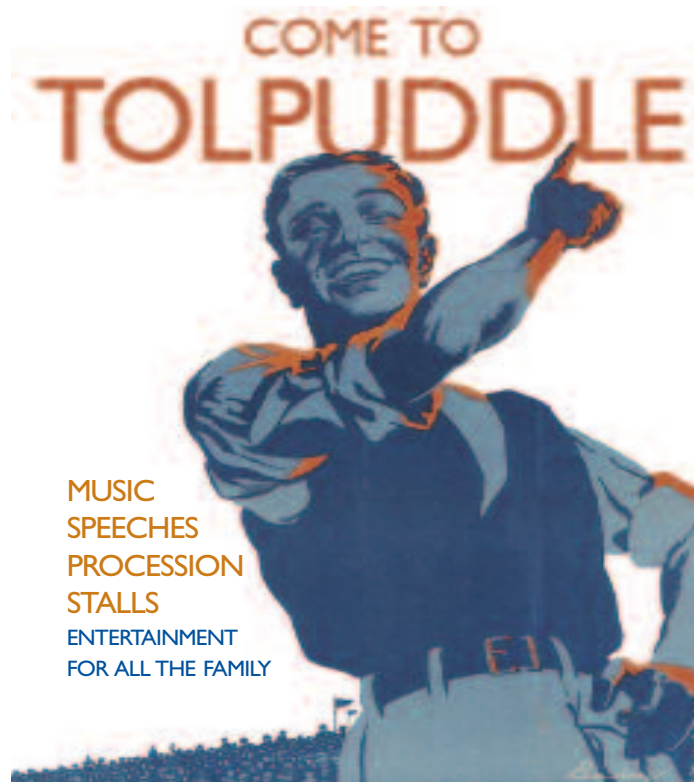
COLIN HUTCHINSON – LOSS AT CROYDON

Members at Croydon Tram/Light Rail No 1 branch were shocked to hear that one of our members, Bro Colin Hutchinson, had died of a sudden heart attack on 24 March.

Colin had been a Tram Driver for First Tram Operations since 10 October 2004.

Our members have lost a good friend and colleague and would like to extend their condolences to his family.

ROBERT SAMBRIDGE – Secretary – CTLR branch

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YOU TELL US

These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB or by email to journal@aslef.org.uk

Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can.

This month we continue our STAR LETTER feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

COMPROMISE ON CONCESSIONS?

I know that we've been campaigning for fairer travel concessions and not making too much progress.

I think that priv fares are quickly becoming worthless as standard 'turn up and go' fares are going through the roof. In most cases it is cheaper to get an advanced public fare than a priv.

Surely if rail companies feel it's not in their interests to offer free passes (like the old BR boxes) then they should offer the cheapest possible public fare to staff? I feel this would be a reasonable compromise.

B Cooper Driver - East Ham Depot

WORK STOPPED BEING A PLEASURE

I read the letter from J G Davies in the May Journal, but I have to say that while I appreciate that under British Rail things were far from perfect with lack of investment and low wages - at least it was a pleasure to go into work those days.

Today's improved salaries have come at a very high price

for drivers, especially in the freight sector. But they were only achieved by selling all conditions of service worth anything. I'd hate to think greed had got the better of common sense.

When that letter arrived asking for voluntary redundancy from DB Schenker, it was filled in and returned by first class post on the same day.

I'm 46 years old and with 29 years service I feel pity for my friends left behind working on the privatised railway.

Gordon Young - Warrington

PREMIER LEAGUE ASLEF

I'd like to thank Thompsons Solicitor in Newcastle who acted on my behalf in a recent compensation claim, with special thanks to solicitor Paul Morpeth for his excellent work over the past four years. Thanks also to Brian Scott, our Company Council rep, for his assistance.

I wish all my colleagues the very best for the future with special thanks to my friends over the border - the Tartan Army! People like Chic and Davy Bolton and Ian Cowan from Motherwell.

I was fortunate to start my footplate career at the Carlisle Canal Depot in 1961. It has a strong ASLEF presence with such great men as John Wallace and Bill Graham. These comrades taught me lessons about the importance of trade unions which I have tried to carry out through my railway career.

I am fully aware that without the strength of ASLEF I would not have received the excellent settlement of my recent claim for compensation. I'm enclosing a cheque for the Orphan Fund.

Frank Dolan Retired - ex EWS

OFFERS PEACE OF MIND

I would like to thank ASLEF, especially District Organiser Andy Morrison and my local level representatives at Cambridge for their support and representation through my recent difficulties. Since

DEPOTS SPEEDS NEED BRINGING UP TO DATE



I think it's about time we brought depot speeds up to date. Five mph may have been the correct speed in steam days with oil lamps, gas lighting and everything painted black - but we now have a modern railway with well lit depots and sidings, yellow fronts on trains and many with LED front marker lights, HV vests and better safety conditions.

Wouldn't 10mph be more realistic?

DEREK PEARS - Driver - Norwich.

becoming a newly qualified driver I have unfortunately fallen foul of the competency development procedure and due to the skilled representation I received I have been given an opportunity to continue in my career.

In hindsight I am obviously pleased that I joined ASLEF at the earliest opportunity and, although it could be said that I've already had more than my money's worth, I would recommend to others the continuing peace of mind that comes with being a members of ASLEF.

Steve Brown Driver - NXEA Cambridge

THANKS FROM DAVE CALFE

I would like to thank all the members in District 6 who participated in my re-election to the Executive Committee, I would also like to thank all the Branches that nominated me and Pete McNally for the way he conducted his campaign. I have been proud to serve the membership for the last four

years and look forward to continuing the progress we have made as a trade union.

Dave Calfe EC member - District No6

ASLEF'S THE BEST UNION FOR DRIVERS

When I entered the footplate line of promotion early in 1950 as a 15-year-old engine cleaner, I was approached about a union by two drivers, one from the NUR and the other from ASLEF. As a youngster, I didn't know the difference.

Another old driver took me to one side and said, 'Son, in about 15 years you might be a driver. If you get involved in a incident or a dispute, you'll want a rep in your corner who knows what it's like to handle a train at 90mph in the fog, and who knows what it's like to get up at three in the morning in the middle of winter.'

That made up my mind, and I remained an ASLEF member for the next 47 years.

With respect, my advice to

(continued on page 22)

Change of address form

Name.....

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.....Postcode.....

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Branch.....

Membership No.....

Employer.....

LETTERS to the EDITOR

ASLEF is quote examples similar to mine, and I am sure these young drivers will realise a union run by drivers for drivers is their best bet.

Ron Kettle – Retired Driver – Southend Vic

ANOTHER VIEW ON REST DAYS

I am a driver at Kirkdale depot and completely disagree with brothers D. Morgan (March Journal) and P. Barber (April).

I wonder how many rest days they both worked before this economic downturn? Rest day work only covers leave or high levels of sickness which is a good thing if you want a day in lieu. If rest day work was not granted by ASLEF on Merseyrail it would not produce more drivers - it would just mean that the drivers who are fit enough for duty and want time off would not be granted leave. They'd be very disappointed, so rest day work can serve its purpose and make a lot of drivers happy.

I can understand if depots did not have their full quota of drivers and were working on a basic off overtime but I don't think any of the rail companies work like that now.

I think ASLEF has done a great job over the last decade introducing new drivers and it shows a very decisive leadership. Don't get me wrong, we're all living in difficult times at the moment and I can understand both of your views. I hope you can understand mine.

P. Hollis Driver – Kirkdale

MINDFUL OF THE UNION

We would like to pass on our thanks to the DEC East of Northern for their backing and persistence in our problems with Northern regarding a Minder driver. The claim was backdated to 2001.

Ten drivers initially made individual claims - and all were declined. Then they all made a joint claim, of which eight were conceded and two were declined on the basis of their being in the SMD plan either prior to, or when, applying.

Considering several other

drivers had been in a similar position at the time this appeared like discrimination against us. We then took the matter to the DEC East. It appears that they, over a period of a year, took the matter to the point of an 'avoidance of dispute' before our claim was finally conceded.

We feel this could not have been successful without their involvement. We would also like to thank (and we feel we can speak for the other eight drivers from Carlisle) LLC rep Davy Bell for his diligence over a period of seven years, which greatly assisted in a very successful campaign.

The whole episode shows that without the backing of a union such as ours, the managements of today would probably walk all over staff on local issues if it suited them.

Drivers J. Crone and J. Smith – Carlisle

FRIENDSHIP AND SUPPORT

I suffered head injuries in a fall at work. I have to thank John Doyle, Graham Morris, and, especially, Roy Luxford, for their success in achieving continued employment for me with Southern, albeit I'm no longer in the driving grade.

I would also like to record the continuing friendship and support given to me, not only by my ASLEF brothers and sisters, but also by railway colleagues of other grades and unions.

A big thank you to you all.

Geoff Hagan – (ex) London Bridge driver

APPRECIATING ASLEF

I would like to put on record my sincere thanks to both Brother Stan Moran (District Organiser) and especially Brother Ian Finn (Company Council Representative) for all the advice and assistance they have given me regarding my recent ill health issues.

Although my career as a Driver with First Great Western is unfortunately coming to an end due to ill health, dealing with both the work-related and financial issues has been made so much easier due to the

stirling work of my aforementioned ASLEF colleagues.

Having been a member of a total of three trade unions during my working life this has been the first time that I have had to request union assistance. Although it has always been reassuring to know that, should it be necessary, the services of ASLEF were there to call upon, it is only when you need assistance that you fully appreciate the help that is available.

Paul Swan – Driver – Oxford

RAY OF SUNSHINE

I would like to thank ASLEF and especially Vince Reynolds, the Thompsons solicitor who acted for me, and my barrister Mark Whalan. Due to their skill I received a substantial payout from EWS for my back injury. It was caused by a lack of maintenance of the turntable on which I was trying to turn a loco on in 2005.

I was finished up in Dec 2006 under the ill health scheme after

45 years on the footplate. As for retirement- it's great! I wish I'd taken it earlier!

Ray Cooper – Retired Member – Hither Green

OFF TO THE RSSB

Having recently left Heathrow Express where I was a train driving instructor, I am resigning my membership of ASLEF. This is because I've taken up a position with RSSB working as a Workforce Development Specialist. I look forward to continuing to work with ASLEF to provide the best learning and personal development opportunities for all.

I'm grateful for ASLEF's support during my time as a Driver. In particular I'd like to give special mention to two tireless pillars of the Heathrow Express branch, Folusho Olushola and Marv Poonia. They have always supported me well, and were there again when I was going through the voluntary redundancy process.

Andrew Taylor – ex Heathrow Express

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To advertise in the ASLEF Journal please contact Sarah Francis on 020 7317 8600 or sfrancis@aslef.org.uk



LONGSIGHT BRANCH has produced a Commemorative Badge Limited to 500 Numbered Copies. They are available for £5.00 plus £1 p&p from the Branch Secretary Fred Clarke at 80 Brookfield Avenue, Poynton, Stockport, Cheshire, SK12 1JE. Please make cheques payable to F.Clarke.

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LIMITED RAMSGATE ASLEF BADGE is now available in a limited edition of 100 individually numbered badges struck to commemorate the restoration and re-naming of ex Ramsgate loco Manston. They are £5.00 each with first class recorded delivery at £1.50. For further details either email asleframsgate@hotmail.co.uk or phone Ramsgate branch secretary Dave Bull on 07941142163

ASLEF NOTTINGHAM BRANCH 125 YEAR CELEBRATION TIES (1883 – 2008). Blue with Robin Hood motif. Few remaining. £10 including p and p. Cheques payable to Nottingham Locomen's Welfare Fund. Contact Branch Sec A. Jones, 23 Matlock Ave, Mansfield, Notts NG18 5DW.

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FREE LEGAL ADVICE ASLEF also provides first class free legal advice – both for members and for their dependents. In the first six months of this year we have secured £1,442,369 in compensation claims! Call the helpline on 0808 100 8009

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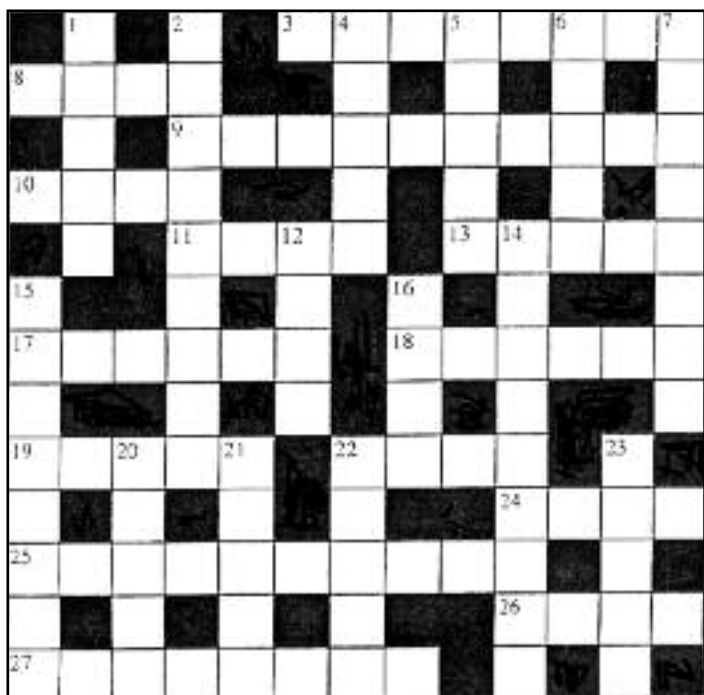
SACKINGS OR OTHER PROBLEMS AT WORK Harassment, discrimination or bullying? If your local, branch or district representative is unavailable, call the Industrial Relations department at union headquarters (020 7317 8600) or email info@aslef.org.uk

ASLEF *more than just a union*



Prize Crossword No. 38

set by TLC



Solution to Crossword No 37 which appeared in the May edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **Chris Leeks** from **Bury St Edmunds**.

ACROSS 1 Signal lamp 6 Fare 10 Equator 11 Nearest 12 Mellowing 13 Tiara 14 Rails 15 Gardening 17 Signaller 20 Third 21 Alibi 23 Constrain 25 Trainer 26 Adoring 27 Deer 28 Persistent **DOWN** 1 Steam 2 Gruelling 3 Action Stations 4 Lurking 5 Manager 7 Arena 8 Estranged 9 Battle Stations 14 Restarted 16 Imitative 18 Lucerne 19 Runways 22 Irate 24 Night

Thanks for all your responses to the 37th ASLEF crossword in the May edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

CLUES ACROSS

- 3 Regular traveller (8)
- 8 Town in Cornwall (4)
- 9 Those being carried on British Rail (10)
- 10 Passport endorsement stating length of stay permitted etc. (4)
- 11 Steals, pilfers (4)
- 13 Electrical palindrome (5)
- 17 Room where the typing/paperwork is done (6)
- 18 It may be chipped, fried, mashed or boiled (6)
- 19 Strong, sturdy (5)
- 22 Procedure giving one lasting curls at the hairdressers (4)
- 24 One who leads prayers at a Mosque (4)
- 25 Moving staircases (10)
- 26 It gets decorated with baubles at Christmas (4)
- 27 Rail service which is operated all over the country (8)

CLUES DOWN

- 1 An undercarriage with wheels for pivoting beneath a railway vehicle (5)
- 2 Leaving the station (9)
- 4 Pop group or desert watering hole (5)
- 5 Large country house with land (5)
- 6 River which flows through the Midlands (5)
- 7 Place to relax before the train arrives (4-4)
- 12 Refreshing alcoholic drink (4)
- 14 They always looks on the bright side (9)
- 15 Underground line (8)
- 16 Part of a Church (4)
- 20 Complete, unabridged (5)
- 21 Greeting (5)
- 22 Type of unleavened bread (5)
- 23 Pay these before boarding (5)

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25



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